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REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD ON ITS WINTER ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION HELD AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS ON 5 FEBRUARY 1991

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I. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

1. The Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) held its first formal winter organizational session at United Nations Headquarters on 5 February 1991. Officers of the Executive Board for the period 1 August 1990-31 July 1991 were as follows:

Chairman: Ms. Lisbet Palme (Sweden)

First Vice-Chairman: H.E. Ms. Mira Seth (India)

Second Vice-Chairman: Dr. Vaclav Vacek (Czechoslovakia)

Third Vice-Chairman: H.E. Mr. Ramiro Piriz Ballon (Uruguay)

Fourth Vice-Chairman: Miss Chipo Zindoga (Zimbabwe)

Chairman, Programme Committee: Mr. Gabriel N. Fernandez (Liberia)

Vice-Chairman, Programme Committee: Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury (Bangladesh)

Chairman, Committee on Administration and Finance: Mr. Frederick Ward (Canada)

Vice-Chairman, Committee on Administration and Finance: Mrs. Judith Springer (Barbados)

2. The agenda of the 1991 winter organizational session, as adopted, and the list of documents for the session are contained in document E/ICEF/1991/L.3. The Executive Board held two plenary meetings on 5 February 1991.

II. PLENARY MEETINGS

A. Introduction by the Chairman

3. The Chairman opened the first formal winter organizational session of the Executive Board by welcoming two new members of the Bureau of the Executive Board: Dr. Vaclav Vacek (Czechoslovakia), Second Vice-Chairman, and Miss Chipo Zindoga (Zimbabwe), Fourth Vice-Chairman. She reminded the Board that this formal session had been initiated as a result of decision 1990/1, and replaced the informal pre-Board meetings, which, in previous years, had been held during the month of February.

4. The Chairman reported that, in accordance with decision 1989/3, the Bureau had continued to review the rules of procedure and the working methods of the Executive Board, in order to update them continually and to improve the efficiency of the Board. She outlined the following proposals and suggested that they be considered under agenda item 8, other business:

(a) Would it be advisable to adapt previous decisions further to the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council?

(b) Should the Executive Board's programme of work and its documentation be further biennialized?

(c) In the light of the increasing workload of the Board, should the length of its regular sessions be extended? Could the sessions be more efficiently structured? Would more parallel meetings be necessary or desirable?

(d) Would it be advisable to establish a mechanism for in-depth consultations on policy issues between sessions?

(e) Could the role of the Bureau be strengthened? Was its size appropriate? Did it require a rapporteur? Should its mandate to examine procedures be permanent?

(f) Should the existing rotation practice of the chairmanship be re-examined and the tenure of the chairman extended to two years?

(g) How could the Board best ensure a full complement of its membership on the joint committees with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) over a two-year period?

B. Overview of key developments

5. The Executive Director briefed the members of the Executive Board on key developments in the past year of interest to UNICEF.

6. He referred to the detrimental effects of the situation between Iraq and Kuwait on United Nations operations in the Middle East, but underscored the importance of sustaining the momentum for children, which had been set in motion with the adoption of decision 1990/2, in which the Board outlined quantifiable goals for children to be achieved by the year 2000. Those goals had subsequently been endorsed by the World Summit for Children and the General Assembly in its resolution 45/217 of 21 December 1990.

7. The Executive Director informed the Board that the secretariat had begun a series of regional consultations with staff around the world, in order to develop strategies to support the implementation of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, adoped by the World Summit for Children.

8. The Executive Director also briefed the Board on achievements and constraints in various areas of UNICEF activities. He said that although information was not yet complete on immunization coverage for 1990, preliminary figures indicated that the global goal for universal child immunization, 80 per cent coverage for all antigens, would be attained.

C. Major issues before the Executive Board at its 1991 regular session

9. The Board had before it document EB/1991/005, "Issues for the 1991 Executive Board". This document, which summarized the range of programme, external relations and operational issues for consideration at the 1991 regular session, was introduced and commented on by the three Deputy Executive Directors.

1. Programme issues

10. The Deputy Executive Director (Programmes) outlined how programme resources were being shared among various sectors, with the appropriate redistribution of allocations, as directed by the Board. Africa continued to receive the major share of UNICEF resources, receiving 37 per cent in 1990.

11. The Executive Board was informed that, as a result of the biennialization of the medium-term plan, at its 1991 regular session the Board would have only to review and adopt the financial plan. A total of 59 funding proposals would be before the Board, of which 28 would be country programme recommendations. The extended country programme presentations made to the Board would be on Angola, Chile, Guinea, India, Nigeria, Turkey and Viet Nam.

12. The Board was also informed that the question of cooperation with the countries of Eastern Europe would be covered in the Executive Director's report and not within the context of the external relations policy review.

13. In commenting on the issues to be discussed at the 1991 regular session, one delegation noted that the impact of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) on children and women was potentially so detrimental as to warrant greater attention from the Executive Board, and recommended that the issue should be the subject of a policy review in 1991.

14. Another delegation reacted to information on the opening of an office in Romania by reminding the secretariat that it had been the Board's understanding that UNICEF cooperation with the countries of Eastern Europe would be handled by the UNICEF office at Geneva.

15. On the question of a policy review on AIDS, the secretariat informed the Board that the issue would be addressed in the Executive Director's report to the Board and that the Board could take a decision at its 1991 regular session on whether the topic should be taken up as a separate agenda item in subsequent years.

16. In response to the question on the office in Romania, the secretariat informed the Board that the office did not have the status of a UNICEF country office but was a project management office, to provide necessary operational support during an intense period of UNICEF cooperation in Romania.

2. External relations

17. Regarding the issues related to external relations, the Deputy Executive Director (External Relations) provided an update on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, now ratified by 70 States, and drew the Board's attention to the policy review on the role of UNICEF in the implementation of the Convention (E/ICEF/1991/L.7), which was available in advanced copies, in English only. He informed Board members that the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights would address the Board in April when the item on the Convention was before the Programme Committee.

3. Operational issues

18. Regarding operational issues, the Deputy Executive Director (Operations) said that the revised budget estimates for the period 1990-1991 indicated the need for an additional $25.9 million to cover mandatory increases and $5.3 million for additional requirements of existing activities. The proposed budget for the period 1992-1993 showed an annual real growth of 4 per cent after adjustments to reflect the 5 per cent global inflation rate. UNICEF income projections were based on a 20 per cent increase, which, the Board was informed, was realistic.

19. In addition to the standing documentation on operational issues, the 1991 Board would be asked to consider a report on headquarters office accommodation (E/ICEF/1991/AB/L.9). This review had been requested by the Executive Board in decision 1990/25, and was based on the findings of a consultant firm employed to assist in the analysis of needs and possibilities for additional office space.

D. Preparations for the 1991 regular session

1. Status of documentation

20. The Board was also briefed on the status of documentation (E/ICEF/1991/Inf.2) and the organization of work for the 1991 regular session.

21. Several delegations underscored the importance of timely distribution of documents and reminded the secretariat of the importance of respecting the six-week rule. The secretariat was also reminded that all documents requesting Board action should indicate this clearly on the cover page, and all new proposals and recommendations must include budgetary implications. Documents should also indicate the agenda item to which they referred. In response to the latter proposal, the secretariat responded that documents often related to several agenda items, in both plenary meetings and meetings of the two Committees, and for that reason it might be difficult to identify the agenda items corresponding to each document.

2. Provisional agenda

22. The Secretary of the Executive Board introduced the provisional agenda for the Board's 1991 regular session, to be held at United Nations Headquarters from 22 April to 3 May 1991 (E/ICEF/1991/1).

23. One delegation requested that the agenda include a separate item on AIDS. The secretariat responded that, as the Chairman had stated in her introductory remarks, the previous Bureau had decided that new documentation should emanate not from requests from the floor, but from decisions of the Executive Board.

24. In response to a question from the same delegation as to the agenda item under which the Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean (SAFLAC) would be discussed, the Deputy Executive Director (Programmes) replied that it would be included in the report of the regional directors.

25. Regarding the proposed schedule of meetings for the Programme Committee and the Committee on Administration and Finance, the same delegation noted that because the former always completed its work before the latter began to meet, the Committee on Administration and Finance had no say regarding decisions of the Programme Committee with financial implications.

26. The Deputy Executive Director (Operations) replied that all country programmes were approved by the Programme Committee, but all financial implications were included in the budget, which was approved by the Committee on Administration and Finance.

27. One delegation suggested that the Committee on Administration and Finance and the Programme Committee hold parallel meetings, as they had in the past when they had not been committees of the whole. A second delegation supported that idea, saying that the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had successfully held parallel committee meetings.

28. Ten other delegations, all from developing countries, opposed the idea of parallel committee meetings. Most said that they had small missions and a limited number of staff, but wanted to be able to attend all meetings because of the importance of the issues discussed by the Executive Board. A number said that they already had problems because of drafting sessions meeting in parallel with one of the two committees.

29. The need for an adequate number of drafting sessions was stressed by one delegation. Another said that night meetings should be avoided when possible, while parallel meetings should be used mainly for drafting sessions and not for main committees.

30. The Secretary said that while only four drafting sessions were listed on the provisional agenda, another four or five could be added by the Board, as necessary. Those sessions would be held either at night or in parallel with committee meetings.

31. The representative who had made the original proposal said that he understood the difficulties faced by small delegations, but that there was a great shortage of time during the Board session and there must be ample time for debate and drafting sessions. For those delegations unable to attend parallel meetings, the conclusions of the two committees would in any event be brought to the Board in plenary meeting for final approval.

32. After some delegations pointed out the problems of reopening committee debates in plenary meetings, it was agreed that the Bureau would discuss the matter further, taking into account the views expressed by various Board members.

3. Themes of informal meetings

33. The Executive Board had before it a provisional list of themes for informal meetings (E/ICEF/1991/L.3), to be held daily from 9.15 a.m. to 10 a.m., from the second day of the Board session. The list included the following items:

(a) The Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(b) Strengthening health services at the community level;

(c) Community cost-sharing and cost-recovery;

(d) Romania and Eastern Europe;

(e) The crisis in the Persian Gulf;

(f) Monitoring the goals of the World Summit for Children;

(g) Water and sanitation strategy and progress;

(h) Basic education: post-Jomtien innovative experiences;

(i) Evaluation and research.

34. Delegations generally approved of the proposed themes, although several made suggestions for a number of changes or additional topics. Because of the limited number of meetings, several delegations suggested that items (b) and (c) be combined. It was also suggested that an informal meeting on the Convention might not be necessary because it would be discussed at length during plenary meetings.

35. Other suggestions included emergency operations, which might be combined with a discussion of hunger and famine; the effects of structural adjustment; the role of UNICEF in family planning and population issues; the sustainability of UNICEF programmes; external relations issues; children in especially difficult circumstances (including street, refugee and migrant children and those affected by drug trafficking), which could possibly be combined with a discussion of urbanization and UNICEF programmes; and cooperation between UNICEF and WHO, possibly combined with a discussion of UNICEF AIDS programmes.

36. It was also suggested that the item "Romania and Eastern Europe" should be replaced by "Central and Eastern Europe", which was more accurate.

37. Most delegations agreed that the Bureau should prioritize the various items and make a final decision as to which themes would be discussed. Several suggested that because of the limited time available and the large number of important themes suggested, it might be possible to hold informal consultations, similar to those held by the secretariat at UNICEF House in the week preceding the actual Board session to discuss various Board documents. One delegation suggested holding informal meetings the weekend after the conclusion of the Board meetings, but most agreed that the session should not go beyond its allocated time.

38. Another delegation said that it was regrettable that the informal consultations were held without interpretation and therefore did not allow all members to participate on an equal footing. For that reason, her Government could not support increasing the number of informal sessions, and those sessions must not encroach upon the time allocated for committee meetings.

39. The Executive Director said that it might be possible to hold two informal sessions each morning, thus allowing additional time to discuss all the themes suggested by delegations. He also said it might be possible to poll members of the Executive Board on their preferences.

40. The Board agreed that the Bureau would discuss the matter further.

4. UNICEF Maurice Pate Award

41. The Board had before it a document entitled "Recommendation to the Executive Board for programme cooperation: UNICEF Maurice Pate Award" (E/ICEF/1991/P/L.1) and another on the revised criteria for the award (E/ICEF/1991/L.2), both of which were introduced by the Director of the Programme Division.

42. The Board decided to present the award to the Child-to-Child Trust of the United Kingdom (see chap. III, decision 1991/1). The Child-to-Child Trust was launched in 1978 in preparation for the International Year of the Child in 1979. It is jointly sponsored by the Institute of Education and the Institute of Child Health of the University of London. Since its inception, the concept of child-to-child has spread to over 70 countries. The Trust is based on a deep commitment to the following principles:

(a) The concept of primary health care, i.e., developing the power of individuals and communities to take responsibility for their own health;

(b) Faith in the power of children, as community members, to spread health messages to younger children, peers, families and communities;

(c) A conviction of the need for joint action between education and health workers at every level to promote such health education.

43. The Chairman announced that the award would be presented in a ceremony immediately following the closing of the plenary meeting on the first day of the Board session, Monday, 22 April.

44. The Executive Board also approved revised criteria for the Maurice Pate Award (see chap. III, decision 1991/2).

E. Other business

45. One delegation, referring to the request contained in the decision 1990/14, footnote 7, that the Executive Director hold informal consultations on the harmonization of the planning and budgetary processes in UNICEF, requested the Bureau to raise the matter with the Executive Director and asked the secretariat for its thinking on the goal of the consultations.

46. The Executive Board took up the questions on its work and procedures proposed by the Chairman in her opening remarks (see para. 4 above).

47. A number of delegations made preliminary comments on the Chairman's suggestions, although several said that they would need to consult their Governments before making any decisions on the issues raised by the Chairman.

48. One delegation said that in decision 1991/1, the Board had not requested any further work on its procedures, and thus no further discussion was needed on that subject.

49. Several delegations saw some merit in the suggestion that the Chairman serve for a two-year term, and it was suggested that the Chairman be elected on a rotating basis from all regional groups, which was the practice of all other United Nations bodies.

50. Regarding the role of the Bureau, it was agreed that its main function was to facilitate the work of the Executive Board, although some delegates said its mandate should perhaps be clarified, particularly regarding its work between Board sessions.

51. A number of delegations were in favour of continued biennialization of the work of the Board, although one pointed out that in 1990 the Board had done almost everything it could in that area. Several speakers said that documentation should be kept to a minimum, with as many topics as possible discussed in the report of the Executive Director.

52. It was suggested that more detailed proposals on each of the points raised by the Chairman be submitted to the Board, so that it could make an informed decision. It was also requested that more in-depth consultations be undertaken on programme issues.

53. Regarding membership of the joint committees with WHO and UNESCO, it was suggested that in electing representatives to those committees, the Board should ensure the election of those who represented countries that would be on the Board for at least two years.

54. The Executive Board decided to refer the matter to the Bureau for further discussion, and it was suggested that the secretariat prepare a short document on the proposed changes.

III. DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AT ITS 1991 ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION

1991/1. UNICEF Maurice Pate Award

On the recommendation of the Executive Director,

The Executive Board

1. Decides to present the UNICEF Maurice Pate Award, established at its 1966 session to honour significant contributions by an institution in a developing country in advancing the well-being of children, and extended in 1988 to include also individuals, to the Child-to-Child Trust of the United Kingdom;

2. Approves an allocation of $25,000 from general resources for that purpose.

1991/2. Revised criteria for the UNICEF Maurice Pate Award

On the recommendation of the Executive Director,

The Executive Board

Decides that the procedure related to objectives, recipients, nominations and selection for the UNICEF Maurice Pate Award be amended to reflect the following:

1. Objectives and criteria

The UNICEF Maurice Pate Award is meant to call the world's attention to progress being made for children and to methods employed, thus inspiring replication and broader support. The Award shall convey recognition of extraordinary and exemplary leadership in, and contribution to, the advancement of the survival, protection and development of children, whether on a regional, national or global scale. It should also serve to encourage voluntary and grass-roots activities. The work of the recipient should be innovative and inspirational, reflecting leadership in its field. It should also be on a country or regional scale with the potential of emulation so as to have a multiplier effect.

2. Recipients

The UNICEF Maurice Pate Award may be conferred upon an institution, agency or individual, but not upon a head of State or Government, nor upon a Government. The Award shall not be conferred upon any United Nations organization or official.

Caution shall be exercised in the selection to ensure that the selection of a recipient does not inappropriately figure within national political processes. Due regard shall be given to the principle of equitable geographical balance.

3. Nominations

Each year, the Executive Director shall invite nominations for the Award from the Governments of Board member countries, UNICEF representatives, regional directors and other secretariat offices and National Committees for UNICEF in order to ensure a broad range of nominations. Solicitation of nominations shall stipulate a deadline of 31 July of the year preceding the presentation of the Award.

4. Selection process

The biographical data of all formally submitted nominations shall be reviewed and evaluated by the officers of the Board, the Executive Director and the Director of the Programme Division. On the basis of this comprehensive review and evaluation, the Executive Director shall submit a single recommendation for approval by the Executive Board at its February organizational session.